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AND
SANT RATTAN SINGH

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PUNJAB UNDER THE BRITISH

Punjab being a border state, the people of this area had been fighting against the foreign marauders. This land has been devastated by these hoards and it has faced bloodshed. But the valiant sons of this land not only faced these onslaughts but they also developed their motherland by their blood and sweat, As a result Punjab has always been a prosperous province of India.

The British came to India in the garb of traders but they were enamoured by its wealth and resources. In the heart of their hearts they decided to capture this province. They very well knew that they, who had come across the seven seas won't be able enslave the millions of people of India, therefore they resorted to cleverness. They used Indian against Indians to enslave this country. By adopting the policy of 'divide and rule' they extended their territory and finally in 1849 they annexed Punjab and became the Sovereign Rulers of India.

To sole aim to capture India and rule over this country was to enrich England. Therefore they transported raw material from India and brought manufactured goods from the same back to India to earn double profit. To facilitate their trade in the vast areas they built communication system and laid railway lines. They established English schools for creating an English speaking class which would help them in easy communication with the locals. They set up courts. To estrange and wean away the Indians from their proud heritage and preach Christianity they established churches. In this agro based country, where animals are considered a major source of wealth butcheries were opened at various places. Before March29, 1849, when Punjab was annexed by the British, any person committing cow slaughter carried death

sentence but within a short period of a month or so after annexation of Punjab, the Punjab Board of Administration, with the consent of the British Government of India, through its circular letter No.3 dated May 5, 1949 allowed freedom for cow slaughter. The Governor General issued an order on May 20, 1849:

"No one should be allowed to interfere with the practice by his neighbour of custom which the neighbour's religion either enjoins or permit."

Thus by permitting butcheries in Punjab resulted in creating cleavage in the people on religious grounds, because the Hindus worship cow as mother and the Muslims are beef eaters as the British themselves are. The Muslims got encouraged and this came birth to communal clashes.

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KUKA MOVEMENT AND FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Satguru Ram Singh ji had served in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After the death of the Maharaja he had witnessed the degradation of the Khalsa Darbar, the greed of the Sikh Sirdars and lawlessness. Therefore he resigned his job and settled in Bhaini Sahib (Ludhiana) in 1845. He had seen the downfall of the Khalsa Raj. He deeply pondered over the political, social, economic and religious developments during the 12 long years from 1845 to 1857. Thought over solution to these situations, made plans and finally took the plunge and in 1857, on the auspicious day of Baisakhi unfurled the white triangular flag with a call to the countrymen to rise against the British Rule and free the motherland from the shackles of the foreign yoke. This pledge for freedom included freedom of body and soul, wealth and freedom of religious tenets. This pledge was building such a society where cow (the weakers) and have-nots, both will be happy. The cow was the symbol of economic well being and the poor as symbol of the commonman. The protection to cow meant progress of agriculture, creation of employment avnues, development of cottage industries, removal of poverty, end of the landlord system and establishment of equality in the society This all was meant to usher in the establishment of a democratic set up.

Therefore the basis of the movement launched by Satguru Ram Singh ji was "the cow and the poor" and freedom of the motherland To emanicipate the country from the British Rule:

"(guru) Ram Singh, the Sikh thinker and reformer is the first Indian to use non co-operation and boycott as a political tool against the British trade."

(Encyclopaedia Brittanica Vol.8 Page 142)

"The Non Co-operation Movement so vigorously launched by Mahatma Gandhi in our country was earlier launched by Guru Ram Singh fifty year earlier. His principles had five points:

1. *Boycott of government services*
2. *Boycott of government courts*
3. *Boycott of government run schools*
4. *Boycott of foreign clothes*
5. *Disobeying any such law which is against ones conscience"*

(Dr Rajendra Prasad)

Satguru ji established contacts with all patriots, rulers of native states and in the foreign countries with the Rana of Nepal and the Czar of Russia to consolidate a joint front against the British To keep the activities of the Namdhari Samaj a secret so that it does not reach the British a "Kuka Postal System "was developed. To train the Namdhari Sikhs in warfare a Kuka Platoon was raised in Kashmir. To maintain a regular set Suba System was set up, Namdhari Preachers were designated as Subas. In all the areas Suba, Naib Suba, Jathedar and Mahant etc were appointed. In short during the decade of 1857-67 Indians in lakhs rallied under the command of Satguru Ram Singh ji. The countrymen were awakened about their rights and they understood that the British were the enemy. They gave war cries (Kuks) against the British Rule in the streets ad mohallas from which they earned the nomenclature of Lukas and their activities found a place in the history as "Kuka Movement."

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SUBA GIANI RATTAN SINGH

Suba Rattan Singh alias *Giani* Rattan Singh ailas Giana Singh was one of the most dedicated *subas* appointed by Satguru Ram Singh ji. All these names related to the one and the same person. His father Shri Ram Kishan was a resident of *Mand*, Patiala State. Rattan Singh came into contact with Satguru Ram Singh *ji* around 1860-61. He was about 24-25 years of age at that time. He was a bright youngman, good looking, agile, bold and courageous with a sharp vision .In a short time he became close to Satguru Ram Singh and earned a respectable position in the Namdhari circles.

In June 1863 when *Satguru* Ram Singh launched the ceremony of '*anand* marriage' meaning a marriage ceremony with just one and a quarter rupee ,encouraging inter caste marriages sans the rituals like *milni*, dowry , *muklawa* etc, the British confined the Satguru within *Bhaini Sahib* from 1863-1867,he appointed *subas* to carry on the activities of preaching. In the beginning they were five in number but later on more were appointed. Shri Rattan Singh was from the second lot. Suba Rattan Singh was assigned the whole of the *bet* area of the *Sutlej*. He vigorously preached in this area and carried the message of the Satguru, organized the people against the British and cautioned them against the nefarious designs of the rulers of the princely states who were todies of the British. His effective preaching antagonized both the British as well as the native princes. The Maharaja of Patiala imprisoned him for 18 months. Due to the capability Suba Rattan Singh became the justice suba of the *mand* area of the *Malwa*. His erudition earned him the nomenclature of '*giani*'.

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SATGURU PATSHAH

The British could no gauge when the religious revolution started by Satguru Ram Singh, changed into a movement of social awakening and a political consciousness. Under the very nose of the British the Namdhari Subas started organizing Sikhs, the people started joining them and within a span of two to three years lakhs of people joined the ranks of Namdhari sect. The British rulers were astonished by the skills and capability of the Subas of Satuguru Ram Singh. They felt that the Namdhari had become a serious danger to their empire. The Commissioner of Ambala recorded on November 4, 1871 that:

"I see that in earlier papers that Ram Singh was looked upon as successor or actual embodiment of Guru Nanak, the saint. He is now a representative of Gobind, the warrior. "(Mr J.W.Mechnab)

The D I G Ambala Circle Lt.General McAndrews has written

"When first heard of as a successor of Balak Ram of Hazro,he was known as Ram Singh Mahant,afterwards as Guru Ram Singh and then as Satguru Ram Singh and now as Satguru Patshah(emporer)."

This word patshah(emporer was like a red rag to the bull for the British as they thought this word was used for Queen Victoria or anybody else from the royal family like King Edward. In the subjugated India the use of this word 'patshah' with the name of some leader or some guru was considered as revolt against the British Rule. Therefore the prefix of the word 'patshah' with the name of Guru Ram Singh ji branded the "Kuka movement" as an affront to the British

"The British rulers considered this programme of the Namdharis as a parallel government to British rule and that is why they were treated as rebels".(Com Sohan Singh Josh)

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ATTACK ON BUTCHERIES OR BRITISH GOVERNMENT

RAIKOT EPISODE

The butcheries, which were considered to be the symbol of the supremacy of the British hegemony and subjugation of the Indians, were considered as the worst blot by every patriot. But the British after annexation of every area very cleverly supressed the people, made them the hangerson of the government or disinterested in the circumstances. Those who were active were reduced to minority and considered themselves to be helpless. To test the remnants of the pride of the Punjabis, the British established not one but two butcheries in the holy city of Amritsar. Similarly cow slaughter was undertaken in other areas also. A butchery was also functioning at Raikot in Ludhiana District since 1856 under the orders of the District Officer Mr Rickets. Ranjha and Buta were the main butchers there. Although cases of violation of law were registered against them even then and fines were imposed on them, the cow slaughter continued there. The preaching of *Satguru* Ram Singh for over a decade had brought awakening in the masses. *Namdhari* Sikhs considered these butcheries like the death of their national spirit. Therefore they launched an attack on the butchery in the holy city of Amritsar on the night of June15-16 in 1871. The butchers were killed and the cows were set free. After about a month the butchery at Raikot was attacked on the night of July15, 1871. Three *Namdhari* Sikhs entered the butchery, killed the butchers and set cows free, the others waited outside It was raining at that time. The police station was just at a distance of about 500 yards from the place of incident. The police reached the spot but could not find any clue.

On getting the news next day, the Deputy Commissioner Ludhiana

Mr Coven and the Deputy Superintendent of Police Mr Hatchel reached Raikot via Jagraon on July 16 late in the night. They announced a reward of Rs.1000 for the person giving a clue about the attackers of the butchery and also promised clemency from punishment to any person becoming approver. They also deputed trackers. By following the footprints Bhamma Singh and Bhupa reached Jalaldiwal, a village in the Nabha State. At this place the footprints of the two persons got separated. Footprints of six persons were traced upto village Chhiniwal. A telegram was sent to Maharaja Mohinder Singh:

"The footprints of the Raikot murderers have reached upto village Chhiniwal of the Pataiala State Therefore the Lt. Governor has desired that you should extend all possible help for apprehending the culprits." After receiving the telegram the Maharaja announced a reward of Rs.250 to the person helping in apprehending the culprits. Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha State also directed his advocate at Ludhiana and his other offcers to extend full help to the British.

One after the other three attacks in a row had disturbed the British greatly. Deputy Inspetor General Colonel Bailey himself reached Raikot.

On July 21 the Patiala State informed that they have arrested seven *Kukas* in the State.

Punjab Secretary Mr Griffin wrote to the Secretary Government of India Mr A C Bailey that although it was natural that the whole blame will be put on the *Kukas*, yet I am not fully convinced that the actual culprits have been apprehended. *Khazan Singh*, to whose residence the footprints of the murderers of Raikot butchers had led, on production before Muwakkal Hussain, Thanedar helped in recovering three swords and named *Dal Singh* of *Chhiniwal*, Rattan Singh of *Naiwal* and three persons residents of Pitho as murderers of the butchers. When Dal Singh was taken from *Chhiniwal* and produced before the magistrate

at *Bassian Kothi*, he named *Gulab Singh* of *Chuharchak*. He was also apprehended by July23. Dal Singh confessed his crime and also helped in the recovery of four swords. Now it was the turn of the people from Pitho Santokh Singh, the author of Satguru *Bilas* wrote:

"*Daloo* is helping in the arrest of *Pitho* people. Teja Singh of *Dhilwan* has informed that the force has reached Jethupura, take care of yourself.All the Sikh hid in the thicket (jhiri).Dula Singh said, you are blamed, you run away, they will not spare you. Mastan Singh said that if they ran away others will be tortured. We have done this therefore we will face it; we will bear the consequences so that others are not put to trouble. Moreover after doing some deed one must not run away, we will lay down our life."

Thus Sant Mastan Singh, Mangal Singh and Gurmukh Singh were also arrested. Two had already benn arrested, they got Dal Singh and Rattan Singh Naiwal also arrested. Suba Rattan Singh was arrested from Khanna.

On July24, 1871 Mr Coven, Deputy Commissioner Ludhiana is his report sent to the Government from Bassian Kothi wrote:

"Of the seven arrested *Kukas* four are definitely the culprits. Their swords have also been recovered. Four of these swords have blood stains and also tissues of flesh on them. Dal Singh has become approver. Gulab Singh has also been arrested. Giani Singh is the *suba* of these areas, his alias isRattan Singh. Giani Singh has already undergone an imprisonment term of two years in Patiala."

The file was completed within a couple of days and the case was committed to Sessions court through the magistrate. The Sessions Judge Mr McNab had already reached Bassian Kothi. The case was taken up, witnesses were examined. Satguru ram Singh ji was also called to Bassian as a witness.

On July27, 1871, the Sessions Judge declared Sant Mastan Singh, Sant Mangal Singh and Sant Gurmukh Singh, all the three from village Patho and Gulab Singh of Chuharchak. guilty for the murders and awarded death sentence. The Assessors also declared them as culprits.

After July 28 these singh, Suba Rattan Singh and Sant rattan Singh naiwala were sent to Ludhiana Jail and the file was sent to the Chief Court for confirmation of death sentence.

On August 1, 1871 the two judges of the Chief court Judge - C.Boynus and Judge J S Cambel confirmed the death sentence awarded to all the four. Just within a span of nine days the case file was prepared, witnesses examined, the Sessions court gave the verdict and the Chief Court confirmed the sentence.

A special feature of the case is that Gulab Singh was made approver after the Chief Court had confirmed the sentence. Is it possible under the law? But in the case of the Namdharis politics was applicable not the law, because they had butchered the butchers, violated the order of the government and thus lowered the prestige of the government.

"This Gulab Singh is the same rogue and ruffian whose mention has been made by Mr Warburton in a note in his book in which English version of the letters of Satguru Ram Singh has been given. He had studied at Damdama Sahib. Due to his bad character and moral turptitude Satguru Ram Singh had banished him from there.In his letter of Samvat 1920Satguru ram Singh ji had directed the sangat to have no dealings with this corrupt person.(Nahar Singh-Namdhari Itihas)

Thus after the confirmation of the sentence these three Sant Mastan Singh,Sant Mangal Singh and sant Gurmukh Singh were publicly hanged near the butchery at Raikot.

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HANGING OF SUBA RATTAN SINGH AND SANT RATTAN SINGH

The British Government had made up its mind that Sat Guru Ram Singh ji and his subas are to be involved in some times of cases and punish them to finish the "Kuka Movement". Suba Giani Rattan Singh was one of the prominent subas, therefore under the garb of Raikot episode the British decided to finish Suba Rattan Singh.

On September 21, 1871, the Magistrate prepared the case file and submitted it to Sessions Judge Mr. J.W. McNab. According to the case, Suba Rattan Singh and Rattan Singh Naiwal were charged under the sections 109 and 302 of IPC for murdering the butchers or abetting murders.

Mr. MacNab, Session Judge based his judgment on the statements of approvers Dal Singh and Gulab Singh and state witnesses Ram Kaur, Didar Singh Sadh, Neevan Singh, Nambardar of Joga village, Kala Singh, Jawhar Singh and Gurdit Singh. According to the statements of the witnesses, Suba Rattan Singh and Rattan Singh Naiwal had collected the swords and abetted the other persons to murder the butchers. There are definite proofs that they were in full-know of the conspiracy of murder. Under Section 109 and 302 of IPC, they were awarded capital punishment. Three native assessors Mir Ghulan Mohammad, Shri Chandu Lal and Shri Kanhiya Lal also endorsed the judgment of the Sessions Court regarding the sentence. The decision was announced on October 26, 1871.

The case file by the Sessions Court vide No. 65 of 1871 was submitted to the Chief Court as per Rule 398 for confirmation of the

sentence. The three Judges of the Chief Court were Mr. C. Bolynes, C.R. Lindsa and J.C. Cambel. The case was like this:

The State V/s

1. Rattan Singh S/o Budh Singh
   Cast Kuka, Age 28,
   Village Naiwal
2. Giani @ Rattan Singh S/o Ram Kishan,
   Caste Kuka, Age 36,
   Village Mandi

Crime- To commit murder and abet murder
Under Section 109, 302 of IPC

The Judge Bolynas on November 11, 1871, converted the capital punishment into transportation for life because according to Sessions Court the death punishment to Giani Rattan Singh was awarded on the basis of the evidence of Rattan Singh Naiwal. This was against the Criminal Procedure Code because both the persons were being tried for the same crime under the same case. Therefore the contention of Rattan Singh Naiwal can not be admitted as evidence under law. Similarly, the evidence of other witnesses Gulab Singh, Didar Singh Sadh, Gurdit Singh, Ram Kaur and Dal Singh have clearly shown the deference between the true and false facts. The statements of witnesses Jeevan Singh and Kala Singh were not against Suba Rattan Singh. According to Bolynas, the statements of the witnesses on file have not proved that Giani had actually participated in the commission of the crime of murder. He has written that it was possible that he might have joined the discussion for murder, therefore he has given the judgment of changing the capital punishment into transportation for life. Rattan Singh Naiwal was also awarded punishment of transportation for life. But the

Judge Cambel gave this case semi-political colour and confirmed that judgment of the Sessions Court as given on Novemeber 14, 1871 awarding capital punishment.

The 3rd Judge Lindsay also confirmed the judgment in his brief version giving capital punishment to both the Singhs.

This way the Chief Court by a judgment of 2-1 confirmed the death sentence to Giani Rattan Singh and Rattan Singh Naiwal. November 26, 1871 was the day fixed for hanging.

The hanging was to be executed publicly to create terror in the minds of the commonman. For hanging silken ropes were strung with the bunyan tree outside the Central Jail of Ludhiana. Arrangements for security guards were arranged as people in large number have gathered some of them just observers and patriots. There was pin-drop silence. Everybody was thinking what will happen? How will it happen? How will both the Singhs behave ? On their part both the Singhs got up in the morning, bathed with cured, put on white dress and happily walked out of their barrack towards the bunyan tree where they were to be hanged. The people were stulled:

"When Baba Giana Singh climbed the footboard, he said 'O brown eyed why are you standing with your back, why don't you face. I will take rebirth from a jatt mother after 10 months where new dress and take up sword and will give a fight to you again."

They put the noose around their neck themselves, gave a slogan of "Sat Sri Akal" and the board under their feet was pulled. That was the end. Both the Singht were cremated on the banks of Budha Darya.

This way the great sons of Mother India and beloved Singhs of

Satguru Ram Singh- Suba Giani Rattan Singh and Sant Rattan Singh laid down their lives for the freedom of the Nation and upkeep of their religion.

136 years have elapsed to their martyrdom. We are observing 150th anniversary of the Kuka Movement. But in Ludhiana at the sight of old jail, where Namdhari Martyrs Memorial is being constructed, the old bunyan tree, where hanging took place, still feels young, because it is history to which it belongs. It is related to the martyrs. The touch of the martyrs have made this tress a sacred one. Even today its foliage and branches seem to be paying homage to Suba Rattan Singh and Sant Rattan Singh for their martyrdom.

We are celebrating the anniversary of the First War of Independence and bow our head to these martyrs.

"We pay respect to those martyrs – who awaken the Nation and slept themselves".

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